

VZCZCXYZ0025
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHVB #0740 1651300
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 141300Z JUN 06
FM AMEMBASSY ZAGREB
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6304
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHDC
RHEFAFM/DIR AFMIC FORT DETRICK MD
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUCPDOG/USDOC WASHDC
RUEHRC/USDA WASHDC

UNCLAS ZAGREB 000740

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT PLEASE PASS TO DS/DSS, DS/IP, M/MED/JCTRIPLETT
FAS/CMP/DLP WETZEL AND MAGGINNIS
FAS/ITP/EAMED POMEROY AND FLEMING
CA/OCS/ACS DAVID SCHENSTED
USAID FOR E&E/ECA/B/ANNE CONVERY

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [TBIO](#) [SENV](#) [ECON](#) [EAGR](#) [PREL](#) [CASC](#) [KFLU](#) [HR](#)

SUBJECT: CROATIA AVIAN INFLUENZA UPDATE: JUNE 14

REF: ZAGREB 459 AND PREVIOUS

¶1. (SUMMARY) WHILE THERE HAVE BEEN NO NEW REPORTS OF AVIAN INFLUENZA (AI) IN CROATIA, SCIENTISTS AT THE CROATIAN VETERINARY INSTITUTE'S POULTRY CENTER ARE USING A NEWLY PURCHASED REAL-TIME PCR MACHINE FOR ROUTINE TESTING OF WILD BIRDS. THE CENTER DIRECTOR SAID NOW CROATIA IS BETTER PREPARED IN CASE OF ANOTHER AI OUTBREAK. THE MACHINE WILL ENABLE SCIENTISTS TO TEST FOR AI MORE EFFICIENTLY AND QUICKLY, WITH LESS DANGER OF EXPOSURE TO THE VIRUS BY THE CENTER STAFF. IT WILL ALSO ALLOW THE CENTER TO TAKE A MORE PROACTIVE APPROACH IN TESTING FOR THE VIRUS. (END SUMMARY)

¶2. DR. VLADIMIR SAVIC, DIRECTOR OF THE POULTRY CENTER OF THE CROATIAN VETERINARY INSTITUTE, SHOWED ECONOFFS THE NEW REAL-TIME POLYMERASE CHAIN REACTION (PCR) MACHINE AT THE CENTER. ALTHOUGH THERE HAVE BEEN NO NEW REPORTED CASES OF AI IN CROATIA SINCE LATE MARCH, SAVIC HAS BEEN RUNNING SAMPLES ON THE NEW MACHINE SINCE IT WAS SET UP JUNE 7 TO CALIBRATE THE EQUIPMENT.

¶3. SAVIC SAID CURRENTLY THE CENTER IS CONDUCTING PASSIVE MONITORING, TESTING DEAD BIRDS AS THEY ARE REPORTED. ABOUT 50 DEAD BIRDS ARE REPORTED DAILY WITH A VARIETY OF CAUSES OF MORTALITY. IN THE FALL, SCIENTISTS PLAN TO CONDUCT ACTIVE MONITORING AT CRITICAL LOCATIONS SUCH AS LAKES, FISHPONDS AND OTHER HABITATS OF BIRDS LIKELY TO CARRY THE VIRUS. SAVIC SAID THEY PLAN TO CATCH 2,300 WILD BIRDS AND RELEASE THEM AFTER TESTING. HE CRITICIZED A PRESS REPORT THAT INACCURATELY SAID THE CENTER PLANNED TO KILL 2,300 BIRDS.

¶4. After the recent outbreak in Romania, Savic traveled there to meet Romanian scientists battling AI in poultry. He said he doesn't expect any impact in Croatia because the virus is not being found in wild birds, only poultry, which is not crossing the border. Savic believes that human mishandling of infected poultry was more likely the cause of the Romanian outbreak than wild birds.

15. SAVIC NOTED THAT HE WAS ALSO ASKED TO GIVE A BRIEFING ON CROATIA'S HANDLING OF THE AVIAN INFLUENZA INCIDENTS TO CROATIAN MILITARY OFFICIALS WHO WILL PARTICIPATE IN MILITARY EXERCISES IN UKRAINE IN SEPTEMBER.

FRANK